

Com forth, my white spouse! for out of doute,
Thou hast me wounded in myn herte, O wyf!
No spot of thee ne knew I al my lyf;
Come forth, and lat us taken som disport;
I chees thee for my wyf and my confort!

Swiche olde lewed wordes used he.

IN Damyan a signe made she,
That he sholde go biforen with his cliket:
This Damyan thanne hath opened the
wyket,

And in he stirte, and that in swich manere,
That no wight myght it se neither yhere;
And stille he sit under a bussh anon.

HIS Januarie, as blynd as is a stoon,
With Mayus in his hand, and no wight mo,
Into his fresshe gardyn is ago,
And clapte to the wyket sodeynly.

Now, wyf, quod he, heere nys but thou and I,
That art the creature that I best love;
for, by that Lord that sit in hevne above,
Levere ich hadde to dyen on a knyff,
Than thee offende, trewe deere wyf.
for Goddes sake, thank how I thee chees,
Noght for no covetise, doutelees,
But oonly for the love I had to thee.
And though that I be cold, and may nat see,
Beth to me trewe, and I shal telle yow why.
Thre thynges, certes, shul ye wyne therby;
first, love of Crist, and to yourself honour,
And al myn heritage, toun and tour;
I yeve it yow, maketh chartres as yow leste;
This shal be doon tomorwe er sonne reste.
So wisty God my soule brynge in blisse,
I prey yow first, in covenant ye me kisse.
And though that I be jealous, wyte me noght.
Ye been so depe enprented in my thought,
That, whan that I considere youre beautee,
And therewithal the unlikly elde of me,
I may nat, certes, though I sholde dye,
forbere to been out of youre compaignye
for verray love; this is withouten doute.
Now kys me, wyf, and lat us rome aboute.

HIS fresshe May, whan she thise wordes
herde,

Benyngnely to Januarie answerde;
But first and forward, she bigan to wepe:
I have, quod she, a soule for to kepe
As wel as ye, and also myn honour,
And of my wyfhod thilke tendre flour,
Which that I have assured in your hond
Whan that the preest to yow my body bond;
Wherfore I wole answer in this manere,
By the leve of yow, my lord so deere;
I prey to God that nevere dawe the day
That I ne sterve, as foule as womman may,
If evere I do unto my kyn that shame,
Or elles I empeyre so my name,
That I be fals; and if I do that lakke,
Do strepe me and put me in a sakke,
And in the nexte ryver do me drenche.
I am a gentil womman and no wenche!
Why speke ye thus? But men been evere untrew,
And women have repreve of yow ay newe.

Ye han noon oother contenance, I levee,
But speke to us of untrust and repreeve.
And with that word she saugh wher Damyan
Sat in the bussh, and coughen she bigan,
And with hir fynger signes made she
That Damyan sholde clymbe upon a tree,
That charged was with fruyt, and up he wente;
for verrailly he knew al hire entente
And every signe that she koude make
Wel bet than Januarie, hir owene make.
for in a lettre she hadde toold hym al
Of this matere, how he werchen shal.
And thus I lete hym sitte upon the pyrie,
And Januarie and May romynge myrie.

RIGHT was the day, and blew the
firmament,
Ohebus of gold his strems down
hath sent
To gladen every flour with his warm
nesse.

He was that tyme in Geminis, as I gesse,
But litel fro his declynacioun
Of Cancer, Jovis exaltacioun.
And so bifel, that brighte morwe/tyde,
That in that gardyn, in the ferther syde,
Pluto, that is the kyng of faierye,
And many a lady in his compaignye,
folwynge his wyf, the queene Proserpyne,
Ech after oother, right as ony lyne,
Whil that she gadered floures in the mede,
In Claudyan ye may the stories rede,
How in his grisely carte he hire fette.
This kyng of faierye thanne adoun hym sette
Upon a bench of turves, fressh and grene,
And right anon thus seyde he to his queene:
My wyf, quod he, ther may no wight sey nay,
Therexperience so preveth every day
The tresons whiche that women doon to man.
Ten hondred thousand stories tellen I kan
Notable of youre untrouthe and brotilnesse.
O Salomon, wys, and richest of richesse,
fulfuld of sapience and of worldly glorie,
ful worthy been thy wordes to memorie
To every wight that wit and reson kan.
Thus preiseth he yet the bountee of man:
Amonges a thousand men yet foond I oon,
But of women alle foond I noon.

HIS seith the kyng that knoweth yowre
wikkednesse,

And Jhesus filius Syrak, as I gesse,
Ne spekethe of yow but seelde reverence.
A wyld fyr and corrupt pestilence
So falle upon youre bodyes yet tonyght!
Ne se ye nat this honorable knyght?
Bycause, alas! that he is blynd and old,
His owene man shal make hym cokewold.
Lo, heere he sit, the lechour, in the tree!
Now wol I graunte, of my mageste,
Unto this olde, blynde, worthy knyght,
That he shal have ayeyn his eyen syght,
Whan that his wyf wold doon hym vileynye;
Thanne shal he knowen al hire harlotrye
Bothe in repreve of hire and othere mo.

Ye shal? quod Proserpyne; wol ye so?
Now by my moodres sires soule I swere,
That I shal yeven hire suffisant answer,
And alle women after, for hir sake;
That, though they be in any gilt ytake,
With face boold they shulle hemself excuse,
And bere hem down that wolden hem accuse;
for lakke of answer, noon of hem shal dyen.
Al hadde man seyn a thyng with bothe his eyen,
Yit shul we women visage it hardily,
And wepe, and swere, and chide subtilly,
So that ye men shul been as lewed as gees.
What reketh me of youre auctoritees?
I woot wel that this Jew, this Salomon,
foond of us women foolles many oon.
But though that he ne foond no good womman,
Yet hath ther founde many another man
Whommen ful trewe, ful goode, and vertuous.
Witnessen on hem that dwelle in Cristes hous;
With martirdom they preved hire constance.
The Romayn Geestes maken remembrance
Of many a verray trewe wyf also.

But, sire, ne be nat wrooth, albeit so,
Though that he seyde he foond no good womman,
I prey yow take the sentence of the man;
He mente thus, that in sovereyn bontee
Nis noon but God, that sit in Trinitee,
Ey for verray God, that nys but oon,
What make ye so muche of Salomon?
What though he made a temple, Goddes hous?
What though he were riche and glorious?
So made he eek a temple of false goddis,
How myghte he do a thyng that moore forbode is?
Pardee! as faire as ye his name emplastre,
he was a lechour and an ydolastre,
And in his elde he verray God forsook.
And if that God ne hadde, as seith the book,
Ygared hym for his fadres sake, he sholde
have lost his regne rather than he wolde.
I sette right noght of al the vileynye
That ye of women write, a boterflye!
I am a womman, nedes moot I speke,
Or elles swelle til myn herte breke.
for sithen he seyde that we been jangleresses,
As evere hool I moote brouke my tresses,
I shal nat spare, for no curteisye,
To speke hym harm that wolde us vileynye!

HIS, quod this Pluto, beno lenger wrooth;
I yeve it up! but sith I swoor myn ooth
That I wolde graunte hym his sighte ageyn,
My word shal stonde, I warne yow, certeyn.

I am a kyng, it sit me noght to lye!
And I, quod she, a queene of faierye!
hir answer shal she have, I undertake;
Kat us namoore wordes heereof make.
forsothe, I wol no lenger yow contrarie.

Now lat us turne agayn to Januarie,
That in the gardyn with his faire May
Syngeth, ful murier than the papejay:
Yow love I best, and shal, and oother
noon.

So longe aboute the aleyes is he
goon,

Til he was come agaynes thilke pyrie
Wheras this Damyan sitteth ful myrie
An heigh, among the fresshe leves grene.
This fresshe May, that is so bright and sheene,
Can for to syke, and seyde, Alas, my syde!
Now sire, quod she, for aught that may bityde,
I mooste han of the peres that I see,
Or I moot dye, so soore longeth me
To eten of the smale peres grene.
Help, for hir love that is of hevne queene!
I telle yow wel, a womman in my plit
May han to fruyt so greet an appetit,
That she may dyen, but she of it have.
Alas! quod he, that I ne had heer a knave
That koude clymbe; Alas! alas! quod he,
That I am blynd. Ye, sire, no fors, quod she:
But wolde ye vouchesauf, for Goddes sake,
The pyrie inwith youre armes for to take,
for wel I woot that ye mystruste me,
Thanne sholde I clymbe wel ynogh, quod she,
So I my foot myghte sette upon youre bak.
Certes, quod he, theron shal be no lak,
Mighte I yow helpen with myn herte blood!
He stoupeth down, and on his bak she stood,
And caughte hire by a twist, and up she gooth.
Ladys, I prey yow that ye be nat wrooth;
I kan nat glose, I am a rude man.

And sodeynly anon this Damyan
Can pullen up the smok, and in he throng.
And whan that Pluto saugh this grete wrong,
To Januarie he yaf agayn his sighte,
And made hym se as wel as evere he myghte.
And whan that he hadde caught his sighte agayn,
Ne was ther nevere man of thyng so fayn.
But on his wyf his thought was everemo;
Up to the tree he caste his eyen two,
And saugh that Damyan his wyf had dressed
In swich manere, it may nat been expressed
But if I wolde speke uncurteisly.
And up he yaf a roryng and a cry,
As dooth the mooder whan the child shal dye:
Out! help! alas! harrow! he gan to crye,
O stronge lady stoore, what dostow?
And she answerde, Sire, what eyleth yow?
Have pacience, and resoun in youre mynde,
I have yow holpe on bothe youre eyen
blynde,
Up peril of my soule, I shal nat lyen,
As me was taught, to heele with youre eyen,
Was nothyng bet to make yow to see
Than struggle with a man upon a tree.
God woot, I dide it in ful good entente.
Struggle! quod he, ye, algate in it wente!
God yeve yow bothe on shames deth to dyen!
He swyved thee, I saugh it with myne eyen,
And elles be I hanged by the hals!
Thanne is, quod she, my medicyne fals,
for certeinly, if that ye myghte se,
Ye wolde nat seyn thise wordes unto me;
Ye han som glymsyng, and no parfit sighte.
I se, quod he, as wel as evere I myghte,
Thonked be God! with bothe myne eyen two,
And, by my trouthe, me thoughte he dide thee so.